

**Agency's Response**  
**to Questions for Accountable Budget Review**  
**Species Protection Line Item**

**1. What are the statutory requirements?**

**a. Should the statute/scope of the entity be adjusted?**

*Not at this time. Statute 79-2-303 provides direction and money in the species protection account to "develop and implement species status assessments and species protection measures."*

**b. Does each program have a mission, goals, and objectives that are meaningful and tied to the enabling statute?**

*Yes. The Recovery Program's Office has the following goals and performance measures which tie directly into statute 79-2-303:*

*Species Protection*

- *Goal – Prevent new listings under the Endangered Species Act and recovery species that are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act.*
- *Performance Measures – One downlisting or delisting proposed rule published in the Federal Register per year.*

*Virgin River Program*

- *Goals – 1) Implement actions to recover, conserve, enhance, and protect native species. 2) Enhance the ability to provide adequate water supplies for sustaining human needs.*
- *Performance Measures will be evaluated by the number of stream miles free of red shiners. Red Shiners are one of the main limiting factors for endangered fish recovery in the Virgin River.*

*June Sucker Program*

- *Goals – 1) Recover June sucker so that it no longer needs protection under the Endangered Species Act. 2) Allow for continued use and development of water in the Utah Lake drainage for human uses.*
- *Performance Measures will be evaluated by the number of June suckers in the annual spawning run. The number of June sucker in the annual spawning run is an assessment of the status of the species and an indication of the success of implementing protection measures for the June sucker*

**2. How well has this "investment" performed in the past? What are the goals for the future?**

**a. What value does this division/program add to society?**

*The Department of Natural Resources Recovery Programs Office works with endangered species recovery programs to ensure that all the appropriate partners are working together to find solutions allowing recovery of ESA listed species along with continued economic growth and development. Progress is being made within these programs and several species are being proposed for downlisting. The Recovery Programs Office administers the Species Protection Account which:*

- *Provides Utah's funding contribution toward the endangered fish programs allowing Utah to continue its development of water in spite of ESA listed Species.*

- *Funds projects working on species proposed for listing under ESA or species that are at risk of becoming listed under ESA. Since the inception of the Species Protection Account in the late 1990s, funding has been directed toward more than 20 wildlife, plant, and insect species that were found not warranted for ESA listing. These efforts demonstrate that pro-active management, sound science, and partnerships can reduce or eliminate threats to species, protect species, and ultimately preclude the need for federal protection and the regulatory burdens associated with the ESA.*

**b. Are there meaningful performance measures?**

*Yes, while goals and performance measures for this type of work are difficult, the measures identified above do directly tie to down or delisting ESA species as well as preventing future ESA listings.*

**c. How well do they tie to the organization's mission, goals, and objectives?**

*We feel the goals for the Species Protection Account listed above are directly in line with the goals of the DNR Recovery Programs Office.*

**d. Are the targets reasonable?**

*Yes*

**e. Are the results acceptable?**

*Yes, there are three fish species currently proposed for downlisting, the Desert Milkvetch was delisted in 2018, and more than 20 species were found not warranted for listing under ESA since the inception of the Species Protection Account.*

**3. What programs should be funded for FY 2021? How much?**

**a. Why is state government providing these services? Could this function be done by a local government or the private sector?**

*No, the State of Utah is mandated with managing natural resources, including wildlife species.*

**b. What will happen if the division/program is eliminated or downsized? Who will notice? Who will be affected the most?**

*If the Species Protection Account was eliminated, progress toward down and delisting species in Utah would stall and additional species likely would be listed under the ESA. Additional listings would increase the regulatory burdens associated with the ESA and ultimately slow economic growth and development in areas with ESA listed species.*

**c. Can the taxpayers' investment be reduced by implementing or increasing user fees?**

*Not applicable.*

**d. Should the funding mix be adjusted?**

*No.*

**e. Are some of the past building blocks no longer a high priority?**

*The FY19 ongoing building block to work on mollusks, plants, and insects remains important. The level of knowledge for these species groups is low and more work needs to be directed toward them if additional ESA listings are to be avoided.*

**f. Can some of the expenditures be reduced or eliminated?**

*The species protection program appropriation has essentially been flat for many years. In that timeframe, the number of species proposed for listing under ESA continues to increase to where the*

*prioritization of listing prevention work becomes more difficult each year. Therefore, we feel there should not be any reductions to funding.*